

HARD FESCUE

Festuca brevipila Tracey

Plant Symbol = FEBR7

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials
Center, Pullman, Washington



Clarence Kelley, USDA NRCS

Alternate Names

Festuca trachyphylla, *F. duriuscula*, *F. ovina* var.
duriuscula, *F. longifolia*, *F. cineria*, *F. duriuscula*
var. *cineria*, *F. ovina*

Uses

'Durar' hard fescue is used for stabilizing roadsides and ditch banks, farm tree plantings, cover in orchards, weed suppression, campsites and recreational areas, fairways for golf courses, farm landing strips, runway shoulders, logging roads, skid trails, ski slopes, dryland lawns and as cover for retired cropland. It has been used for grazing, but usually more palatable grasses are preferred. Mature stands are short-statured and have few seed heads, which makes this plant desirable for low-maintenance long-term cover.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description and Adaptation

'Durar' hard fescue is an introduced cool-season perennial bunchgrass developed by re-selection from seed collected by Virgil Hawk in 1934 at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Experiment Station at Union, Oregon. It was released for commercial production in 1949, named 'Durar' in 1961 and registered with

Crop Science in 1964. This was the first commercial release of hard fescue.

'Durar' is an introduced fine-leaved fescue that is long lived, persistent and competitive with other grasses and weeds. The semi-erect fine stems of this densely tufted bunchgrass attain a height of 30 inches when grown in good conditions. Compared to sheep fescue, it has more lax leaves that are longer, broader and coarser.

Hard fescue is native to forest edge habitats and open forests of Europe.

'Durar' is more drought resistant than chewing fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *fallax*), but not as drought resistant as sheep (*Festuca ovina*) or Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*). It is adapted to the 16 to 30 inch rainfall areas of Washington State, Oregon and Idaho. 'Durar' makes a tremendous root system, producing many more pounds of roots per acre than it does in top growth. Root samples taken from the top 8 inches of soil after 6 growing seasons showed 'Durar' with 6,000 pounds of roots per acre and crested wheatgrass with 3500 pounds of roots per acre. It produces up to 700 pounds of clean seed per acre.

'Durar' is adapted to medium and fine textured soils that are well drained. Wet or saturated soils are not tolerated. It is somewhat shade tolerant.

Distribution: Please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

There are 565,000 seeds per pound of clean seed of 'Durar'. A firm, weed-free seedbed is highly recommended. The germinating seedlings are susceptible to soil crusting, so early spring seeding is essential. Seeding should be done with double disk drills with depth control so that seeding depth is no more than 1/4 inch. Early spring seedings work well when made in spring barley stubble.

'Durar' seedlings may not be more than 1 – 2 inches in diameter in the establishment year; however, tremendous gains in competitiveness are made in the second year.

Consult your local Natural Resources Conservation office for seeding and seeding rate recommendations.

Plant Materials <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

Plant Fact Sheet/Guide Coordination Page <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/pfs.html>>

National Plant Data Center <<http://npdc.usda.gov>>

Management

New seedings need protection the first year, so the seeded area should not be used or be subjected to traffic. Weed control is needed especially in the establishment year. Do not fertilize in the year of seeding because this generally results in heavy weed growth. Maintenance applications of fertilizer may be necessary in low fertility critical areas where the stand is stressed. Rotational use is recommended in heavy use areas, along with a maintenance application of fertilizer.

Consult your local university Extension office for fertilizer and weed control recommendations.

Pests and Potential Problems

No serious pests or other problems have been noted.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Over 90 cultivars of hard fescue have been released as of 2007, some of which are Plant Variety Protected. Many of these varieties are for turf and lawn use.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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